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ANSWER TO CHARGES

OF BELIEF IN

MODERN REVELATIONS, ETC.

GIVEN BEFORE THE

Edwards Congregational Church, Boston,

BY

MR. AND MRS. A. E. NEWTON.

"He answered and said, . . . One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, I now see." "And they cast him out." — JOHN 9 : 25, 34.

BOSTON:
BELA MARSH, 15 FRANKLIN STREET.
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1856.

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BY

MR. AND MRS. A. E. NEWTON.

EMBRACING ALSO

A MESSAGE TO THE CHURCH FROM ITS LATE PASTOR; THE WITHDRAWAL FROM MEMBERSHIP; AND THE SUBSEQUENT DISCUSSION BEFORE THE CHURCH.

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THE wide-spread interest that has been awakened to know the result, upon the Edwards Church, of the appeal made to its candor and its love of truth, in the "Letter" addressed to that body — and the anxiety to learn with what arguments, or by what means, the statements and reasonings of that Letter would be met — are thought to furnish sufficient apology for giving this pamphlet to the public. The undersigned is aware that the publication may be regarded by some as a retaliatory measure towards his former brethren; but he is confident that those of them who know him best will be able to attribute it to worthier motives.

He has reason to believe that there are hundreds, if not thousands, of members of churches, who are deterred from freely investigating the facts, or frankly avowing the truths, of the Dawning Era, through dread of church discipline or ecclesiastical censure in some form; and having confronted this "lion by the way," and found him to be a very harmless beast, when one is clad in the mail of truth, he would fain encourage others to the same step.

It is hoped that the publication may be serviceable in aiding some creed-enthralled soul out of the bondage of error, into the freedom and joy, the light and love, of the New Dispensation.

A. E. NEWTON.

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NOTICE

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INTRODUCTION.

With the causes, somewhat extraordinary in their nature, which have led to the ecclesiastical action referred to in the following pages, the public has already, to some extent, been made acquainted, through the publication of the "Letter," addressed to the Edwards Church, in May last, by the persons against whom this action was directed. But little detail, further than is given in the following "Answer," is necessary to a full understanding of the case.

It was not to be expected that "new wine" could, in our day, be retained in "old bottles" with any more safety than eighteen hundred years ago. Soon after the presentation of the "Letter" aforesaid, an effort was made, on the part of some of the more zealous members of the Church, to procure an immediate excision of these branches which had become so strangely and hopelessly heretical. It was alleged that "the purity of the Church, and the honor of religion" demanded unhesitating action. Others counselled moderation and delay, urging that our strange convictions were merely the result of over-taxation of the mind, which rest and quiet would dispel, and our "delusions" were only hallucinations of the mental faculties, which time would dissipate. One only, so far as we have learned, expressed any conviction of the propriety of investigating the *truth* of our convictions, before proceeding to censure and to expel; but even he has never found the "time" (or the courage) to undertake the investigation.

The moderate counsels prevailed for a season; and subsequently the absence, sickness and lamented decease of the pastor of the Church (the late Rev. Preston Pond), with the subsequent depressed condition of its affairs, contributed to still further delays.

At length the prospect of an approaching dissolution of the Church itself, which began to be considered inevitable, awakened some of the members to the importance of attending, ere it should be too late, to the duty (unpleasant we have no doubt it was) which they conceived imperatively devolving upon them. The course of procedure will be found sufficiently indicated in the papers which follow:

[CITATION.]

"*Boston, Dec.* 17*th*, 1853.

"TO MR. ALONZO E. NEWTON AND MRS. SARAH J. NEWTON, MEMBERS OF THE EDWARDS CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH.

"At a special meeting of the Edwards Congregational Church, on Friday evening, Dec. 16, 1853, the Examining Committee of the Church preferred charges against you, a copy of which you will receive.

"In conformity to a vote of the Church, I hereby cite you to appear before the Church on Wednesday evening next, Dec. 21st, at 7 o'clock, at our usual place of meeting, at the corner of Lowell and Causeway streets, then and there to answer to the said charges. Yours, respectfully,

"T. C. DUNNELS,

"Clerk of the Edwards Congregational Church."

[CHARGES.]

"TO THE EDWARDS CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH.

"DEAR BRETHREN: The undersigned, Examining Committee of this Church, having learned that Mr. and Mrs. A. E. Newton, members of this Church, embraced doctrines which are contrary to those set forth in our Articles of Faith; and having labored in vain to dissuade them from their belief in those doctrines, we now, in compliance with the Scripture rule, as laid down in Matt. 18: 15, 16, prefer the following charges against them:

"1st. They believe in revelations made to men at the present time, aside from, and in addition to, those contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, and which they regard as of equal authority.

"2d. They believe that the probation of the soul extends beyond this life, and that eventually all the human race will be restored to the favor and friendship of God, and that none will be eternally lost.

"*Boston, Dec.* 16, 1853."

Signed by five members of the Examining Committee.

In obedience to this citation, one of the accused (Mrs. N. being unable, from illness, to appear) presented himself before the Church, and made the following answer.

ANSWER.

DEAR BROTHERS AND SISTERS: We have been cited to appear before you, to answer to certain charges preferred against us by the Examining Committee of this Church, having relation to opinions held by us, which are alleged to be contrary to the doctrines set forth in your Articles of Faith.

It will be recollected by you that several months since, when we first were led, by irresistible evidences, to embrace the convictions which have given occasion to this proceeding, we waited not to be complained of for dereliction or defection from the faith, but, in a frank and Christian spirit, hastened to acquaint you with the position in which we found ourselves and the wonderful means through which we had been brought to it. This we did in a printed statement, which was presented in a public meeting and placed in the hands of each of you as far as we found opportunity.

Although we did not find it necessary distinctly to renounce the belief in the Articles of Faith to which we had assented, on account of the wide and liberal construction their language was capable of bearing, yet, presuming that you might not wish to fellowship the views we were compelled to adopt, and unwilling to take any unfair advantage of our standing with you, we frankly and kindly asked to be released from all obligations expressed or implied in our relationship to the Church, which might be deemed inconsistent with our avowed convictions.

We had a right to hope that such open fairness on our part would be responded to with something like Christian magnanimity on the part of our brethren and sisters, with whom we had ever been on the most agreeable terms of confidence and sympathy. The notion that a request for release, in consequence of honest and conscientious changes of opinion, where no question of morals or of duty is involved, can be granted only in pursuance of complaints, arraignments, censures and condemnations, is but a relic of that anti-Christian and abominable system of spiritual despotism, which has made a corrupt Church drunken for ages with the blood of Christ's dearest followers, and which "ought not to be so much as named," except with reprobation, among enlightened Protestants of the middle of the nineteenth century.

There seemed to us to be a plain and easy, as well as just and Christian, method open for you to pursue, without in the least sanctioning our belief, or compromising your own integrity; and that was, to pass a friendly vote acceding to our request, and dissolving the connection. It is true, you had no standing rule for such a course, nor was it sanctioned by the precedents of the denomination; but as you expressly claim, as the first principle of your constitution, to be "independent, so far as relates to [your] internal organization, and the regulation of [your] affairs," * you surely had a right, if need be, to suspend existing rules, or to adopt a new one; in fact, to take any *right* course to do a *right* thing.

Such a method of procedure, although repeatedly suggested, you have not seen fit to adopt. On the contrary, it has been insisted that our connection could be severed only by the application of existing rules; in other words, that we must be *thrust out* from you under the ban of censure and excommunication.

* "Principles and Rules," adopted by the Church. — Art. 1.

Now, although, as you must be well aware, such censure and excommunication, under such circumstances, can have no terrors for us, and cannot cause us the least uneasiness, it is but right and proper, just and honorable, that, in proceeding to this result, you should be governed strictly by the rules you profess to follow; that your every step should conform materially with them; and that we should be allowed the benefit of all doubtful constructions that may arise. These are principles recognized and followed by all tribunals making any claims to justice, the world over, and much more should be adopted in the action of a Christian Church. And we can consider no proceedings on your part as valid or worthy of our regard, which are not in accordance with these principles.

We have to allege, therefore, at the outset, before attempting a formal reply to the charges preferred, that the proceedings thus far have not been in accordance with the rules of the Church, nor with the more authoritative directions of the Scriptures; and, furthermore, that the allegations of the Committee, embraced in the preamble to their charges, are contrary to the truth in three particulars.

I. The proceedings do not conform to the rules of the Church.

These rules specify, as "censurable offences," only the following: "Immoral conduct, breach of express covenant-vows, neglect of acknowledged religious or relative duties, and *avowed disbelief of the Articles of Faith.*" They also prescribe that, "No proceedings shall be had against any member, except upon a complaint made in writing, stating explicitly the charges. The presentation of such complaint shall, in all cases, be first made to the Examining Committee, who shall, upon sufficient cause, prefer charges before the whole Church." Again: "Any member having cause of complaint against another, should immediately seek to have it removed in a Christian manner. The directions given in Matt. 18:

15, 16, being our guide, especially in cases of personal offence."

If *these* rules do not apply to our case, then the Church has none that will apply. We state, therefore,

1st. That no complaint has been made by any member, to our knowledge, before the Examining Committee; nor do the Committee allege any such complaint as the ground of their action.

2d. If it be claimed that the Committee as a body has acted in the capacity of complainant, we allege that it has, neither as a whole, nor by proxy, attempted the required steps. It has never visited us or called us before it. We appeared before the Committee at the outset, *on our own motion*, for the purpose of laying before them our "Letter" before presenting it to the Church. Subsequently, a single member called on us, though in no official capacity, and distinctly avowing no other purpose than to ascertain more fully to what extent we had departed from the faith, for his own private satisfaction. Finally, two brethren, members of the Committee, but not giving us to understand that they were in any way acting for the Committee, visited us in company, preliminarily to the commencement of this action, but made no effort to recover us from our alleged errors. Neither the Committee, therefore, nor any individual, has sought to have the cause of complaint removed according to the directions given in Matt. 18: 15, 16, as prescribed by the rule of the Church. Yet the complaint is signed by the Committee as a whole.

3d. The complaint does not even charge against us any offence recognized by the rules of the Church as "censurable." The language of the rule is, "*avowed disbelief* of the Articles of Faith." No such avowal on our part is alleged. The complaint avers that we have "embraced doctrines which are *contrary to* those set forth in our Articles of Faith."

That, *in the opinion of the Committee*, they are so, no doubt; but as they are not necessarily so, *in our opinion*, we consequently avow no disbelief in the Articles, and no charge can lie against us under your rules.

II. The proceedings have not been in accordance with the directions of the Scriptures, which you regard as of higher authority than your rules.

1st. The precept of Christ, as laid down in Matt. 18: 15, 16, is not applicable in the case, since it refers explicitly to cases of personal injury, or offences against individuals. "If thy brother *trespass against thee*" — not if he change his opinion, or fall into error. Furthermore, even if applicable, the first step has not been complied with — "Go and see him between thee and him alone" — by the signers of this complaint, or by any one acting for them, nor in fact in any proper manner by any individual whatever.

2d. The precepts really applicable have been wholly neglected; as, for example, 2 Tim. 2: 25, 26, "*In meekness instructing* those that oppose themselves; if peradventure God will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the *truth*." No one of you has claimed the first qualification for instructing us in relation to our convictions, — that is, any adequate knowledge of the subject of difference. Again: Jas. 5: 19, 20, "Brethren, if any of you do *err from the truth*, and one convert him; let him know that he that converteth a sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and hide a multitude of sins." Gal. 6: 1, "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such a one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself lest thou also be tempted." So far from following these directions, — though we have for seven or eight months invited, and urged, and expostulated, and appealed to every Christian and manly feeling on the part of such of you as we have come in contact with, to induce you to approach

us in the spirit and for the purpose here prescribed, — *not one of you has attempted it!*

III. The complaint alleges, in the preamble to the charges, what we cannot admit to be true, in three particulars:

1st. That we have "embraced doctrines which are contrary to the Articles of Faith." This we deny.

2d. The Committee state that they have "labored in vain to dissuade" us from our belief; whereas, as already shown, no adequate efforts have been made to that end — the majority of the Committee not having ever spoken with one of us in relation to the matter.

3d. They claim to prefer charges "in compliance with the Scripture rule, as laid down in Matt. 18: 15, 16;" whereas, as has been clearly shown, that rule is neither applicable, nor has it been followed in their proceedings.

IV. The charges are indefinite and obscure.

No specification is made as to what Article or Articles of Faith is supposed to be contravened by us; and the first charge speaks of our believing in "revelations made to men at the present day," without qualifying whether revelations by direct divine inspiration, or revelations from the world of spirits, or revelations of scientific or philosophic truth, are intended.

[Having thus clearly shown the defectiveness and invalidity of this complaint, we demurred to further proceedings under it, and requested the Church to withdraw the charges and amend its action. Pending the consideration of this demurrer, an adjournment took place; and, at the opening of the next meeting, without any discussion or action of the Church on the matter, the moderator announced, (on whose responsibility does not appear), that no cause was found for amendment; and with a reprimand for the alleged "captiousness"(!) and "evasion" (!) displayed in the foregoing objections (showing that their intent was wholly misconstrued), we were called upon to proceed with our answer to the charges. Although this proceeding was wholly out of order, we concluded to go forward, rather than display any further "captiousness" in the matter.]

As the Church persists in proceeding in a manner so faulty and invalid, we must insist that its course is governed neither by its own rules, by the precepts of the Bible, by the dictates of Christian love, nor even by the ordinary principles of justice; and, consequently, that we are not bound either to make further reply to these charges, or in any way to respect whatever result may be reached, adverse to ourselves, in the pursuance of such action.

Nevertheless, we are willing to waive our rights for the present, and to make answer directly to the charges preferred against us.

We have no disposition to deny that we entertain the sentiments intended to be set forth, though somewhat imperfectly expressed, in these charges. We do most emphatically believe that "revelations are made to men at the present time," both by direct communication from the spirit-world, and by scientific investigation in the natural world; revelations of truths beyond what are "contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments;" truths important to man's well-being here and hereafter; and that, in so far as these revelations are *true*, they are "of equal authority" with any other truths ever made known, — *since nothing can be more authoritative than* TRUTH. We also believe that the human soul will ever be in a state of probation; that is, of "*moral trial*," or "*proof*" (see dictionary), which implies freedom of agency (to some extent) to do right or wrong; for, if at any time this freedom should be destroyed, this probation cease, the soul will cease to have accountability or moral character. We rejoice, furthermore, in the soul-satisfying conviction, so desirable to every benevolent heart, and so honorable to the Father and Author of all souls, "that eventually all the human race will be restored to the favor and friendship of God, and that none will be eternally lost."

We moreover admit that our convictions on these points,

and on many others which might have been included in this complaint (for we have made no concealment), have undergone much change since we assented to your Articles of Faith. But it will be a proper and sufficient reply to this complaint, if we show, first, that the language of your Confession is so broad and indefinite, that it does not necessarily clash with these sentiments; * and, secondly, that they are supported by

* The following is so much of the Confession of the Edwards Church as bears upon points of doctrine :

"We believe that there is but one God, the Creator, Preserver, and Governor of the Universe ; a Being of perfect and adorable attributes.

"That the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments were given by inspiration of God, and are the only perfect rule of faith and practice.

"That the Godhead is revealed in the Scriptures as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost ; and that these three, equal in all divine attributes, are one God.

"That God's eternal purposes respect all actual events ; that, in forming and executing them, he takes counsel only of himself, and that the principles and administration of his government are holy, just and good.

"That man was originally holy ; but that, by sinning against God, he fell from that state, and that, in consequence of the fall, all mankind are by nature destitute of holiness, and disposed to sin.

"That Jesus Christ, by his humiliation, sufferings, and death, has made an Atonement sufficient for the redemption of all mankind ; and that pardon and eternal life are, through him, freely offered to all.

"That Repentance and Faith in Christ are the only conditions on which any can avail themselves of the offers thus graciously made ; and that all, while left to themselves, do refuse to comply with these conditions.

"That the Holy Spirit, by his regenerating energies, doth influence some to comply with these conditions ; and that those whom he renews are 'kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation.'

"We believe in the resurrection of the dead, and in a day of judgment ; when all mankind are to receive a sentence of retribution, according to what they have done ; and that the righteous will then enter into life, and the wicked will go away into punishment, both of which will be without end."

the testimony of the Bible, which you regard as of supreme authority; or, lastly, that they are capable of being substantiated by evidence independent of, but in every way fully equal, if not superior, to that derived from the Bible.

We reply, then,

1st. That the Articles of Faith of this Church do not declare that no revelations are or can be made to men at the present time; nor that, if made, they would not be of equal authority to those recorded in the Bible. The only expression bearing upon the point is Art. 3d, last clause, "*And are* [that is, the Scriptures] *the only perfect rule of faith and practice.*" As we have never claimed that any revelations of our day form *another* perfect rule of faith and practice, we cannot be charged with *avowing* a disbelief of this article. And as the term "perfect" does not necessarily imply that nothing more could ever be given (David having said that "the law of the Lord was *perfect*"* in his day, although but a small part of the Bible was then written), we can maintain our present belief without being *obliged* to reject that statement.

2d. The Articles of Faith nowhere assert that "the probation of the soul" does not extend beyond the present life; nor do they explicitly deny that "eventually all the human race may be restored," &c. The 9th Article only can bear upon this topic, and that avers simply that the "wicked will go away into punishment . . . . which will be without end." But as *punishment* is not necessarily *torment*, often consisting, even when administered by human laws, in mere *negation* of good (as in the case of a criminal who is merely *restrained*, or deprived of what others enjoy, instead of being made to suffer positive pain), — and, as we can conceive, nay, we firmly believe, that the consequence of wickedness in any

* Psalm 19 : 7.

being will and must be to deprive him of good or happiness that he might enjoy by pursuing an opposite course, — so that, at any given point, to all eternity, he will be *deprived* of an amount of enjoyment to which he would otherwise have attained, — we are not obliged to reject even this Article in consistency with our belief.

We would not be misunderstood as claiming that the creed was *intended* to express views in accordance with our own. The framers of it doubtless entertained very different sentiments. But they have failed to use language that necessarily expresses their sentiments; they have employed that which allows great latitude of construction; and hence we can believe as we do without being amenable to a charge of "avowed disbelief" in its articles.

The truth is, Orthodox creeds have been gradually *fading out* within the last two hundred years, and are now expressed in terms vague, indefinite and tolerant, to what they once were. The Confession of Faith adopted "by the elders and messengers of the Churches assembled at Boston, in New England, May 12th, 1680," and still nominally professed by the Old South Church, in this city, is a very different document from that subscribed to by you; and we doubt if a single individual of this Church could be brought knowingly to assent to some of its statements, or if a dozen members of the "Old South" even, realize to what antiquated and repugnant doctrines they stand committed.* Let us cite an example:

* That this opinion is not stated at random, the following fact will show: A venerable and intelligent gentleman, of high standing both for theological and scientific attainments, who has been some forty years a member of the Old South Church, was called upon by one of us, to request a loan of a copy of the Confession of Faith of that body. He kindly assented, and produced a small pamphlet which he said contained their confession. On examination, it was found to embrace merely a history of the Church, a list of members, officers, etc., with the brief

Chap. III. Art. 3. "By the decree of God, for the manifestation of His glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, *and others foreordained unto everlasting death.*" Art. 4. "These angels and men thus predestinated and foreordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed [designated], and their number is so certain and definite, that it cannot be either increased or diminished." After treating upon the elect, it proceeds: Art. 7. "The rest of mankind, God was pleased according to the unsearchable counsel of his own will, whereby he extendeth or withholdeth mercy, as he pleaseth, *for the glory of his sovereign power over his creatures*, to pass by, and to ordain them to dishonor and wrath, for their sin, *to the praise of his* GLORIOUS JUSTICE"!!! No wonder it is added, in Art. 8, "The doctrine of this high mystery of predestination is to be *handled with special prudence and care*"!

The statements of this "Confession" bearing upon the points embraced in these charges, are as follows:

Chap. I. Art. 6. "The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture; *unto which nothing, at any time, is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men.*"

"Covenant" entered into on admission, to which was prefixed this statement: "The *Confession of Faith* adopted by this Church is that owned and consented unto by the elders and messengers of the Churches assembled at Boston, May 12, 1680." The gentleman at first was confident that no other confession than the "Covenant" alluded to, was required by the Church; but, on being shown this reference, he thought it probable that the document might be found in that rare old work, *Mather's Magnalia*, which he had at hand. On examination, it was discovered in the second volume (Hartford edition), pages 157 to 179, occupying some twenty-three closely-printed octavo pages!

Chap. XXXI. Art. 1. "[At death] the souls of the wicked are cast into Hell, where they remain *in torment and utter darkness*, reserved to the judgment of the great day."

Chap. XXXII. Art. II. "[At the judgment] the wicked, who know not God, and obey not the gospel of Jesus Christ, shall be cast into eternal torments, and be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power."

These statements are direct, positive, unmistakable; and we should despair of an attempt to construe them into any meaning that we could tolerate.

We make these citations for the purpose of proving to you, what you may be unconscious of, that you have yourselves progressed from the old landmarks of orthodoxy. You all know with what vagueness *your* Confession slides over the doctrines so unmistakably put forth in 1680; not even touching at all upon some obnoxious points which were then deemed so essential. The world has advanced, and has borne you unconsciously with it; and here we ground a hope of your so far further advancing, as yet to acknowledge the truth and the orthodoxy of our position.

We reply, secondly, that the sentiments charged against us are taught in the Scriptures.

1st. As regards further revelations than those recorded in the Bible, of equal authority, the Scriptures themselves give evidence that several books have been written at different times, as much by inspiration as any existing ones, which are not now to be found. Professor Stuart enumerates fifteen of these in Old Testament times, and at least two by New Testament writers. (For the evidence, see his work on the Canon of the Old Testament, pp. 180—194.) John the Evangelist furthermore declares that, if all that Jesus did and said during his earthly sojourn had been recorded, he

supposed "the world itself could not contain the books that would be written."*

Our Bible, then, as we have it, does not even contain all that God *had* revealed at the time of its completion; and if it does "embrace all that man needs to know," then Infinite Wisdom is chargeable with having already communicated much that is not needed! But the Bible informs us that further revelations were to come. Christ declared that he had "many things to say," which could not be borne or understood in his day; but he promised to give them through the "Spirit of Truth" who was to "abide forever" with his followers to lead them into all truth.† And even an older prophet foretold that a day should come when men would no longer be taught out of what had been written, but that God should put his law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts.‡ Peter also promised a time of greater and clearer light to come, exhorting his readers "to take heed to the sure word of prophecy, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, *until the day dawn, and the day-star* ARISE IN YOUR HEARTS,"§ — just where it is now arising to some among us.

It may be said that the words, recorded near the close of the Revelations of John, forbid the idea of any further divine communications to man. But this is a most evident mistake. The language is: "If any man shall add unto *these things*" (that is, as limited by the preceding phrase, "the words of the prophecy of *this book*"), "God shall add unto him the plagues," etc.; most plainly confining the denunciation to additions to that book of prophecies which John had been writing. If man were to add to that, or to any other book then written, it would of course be forgery; but to write another book of revelations, or a hundred, if ever God or angels see fit to inspire men to the work, is wholly another matter.

* Jn. 21 : 25. † Jn. 16 : 12, 13 ; 14 : 16, 17. ‡ Jer. 31 : 33, 34.
§ 2 Pet. 1 : 19.

2d. The Bible also plainly teaches the eventual reconciliation of all men unto the Father. For example, it asserts — "And it pleased the Father that in him [Christ] should all fulness dwell; and .... by him to reconcile all things to Himself."* "All things shall be subdued unto Him, ... that God may be ALL IN ALL." † When God shall fully pervade our whole being, we must become pure and holy like Himself; and so of all other creatures. Once more: "For OF Him, and THROUGH Him, and TO Him, are all things, ... to whom be glory forever."‡ And yet again: "As sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign, through righteousness, unto eternal life." §

Many more passages to the same import might be pointed out; and if it be alleged that some parts of the book appear to teach a contrary doctrine, we have only to say that it is no part of our present duty to show that they may harmonize, since we only undertake to prove that the Bible does explicitly teach what we have avowed. True, we once thought otherwise; but we now rejoice to see clearly that we were wrong. We can say of this, and of many other matters, as did the man whose eyes Jesus opened, to the cavilling Jews, "One thing we know, that whereas we were blind, now we see." ‖

Thirdly, we reply to these charges, that our opinions on the points specified rest on evidences independent of, and in our apprehension, fully equal to, the testimony of Scripture.

That "revelations are made to men at the present time," is a matter of positive, daily personal knowledge with us, and with thousands of others throughout the land. Nobody, it is presumed, will attempt to deny so obvious a fact.

That some of these revelations come from the spirit-world, is surely more positively proved to us, and more susceptible

* Col. 1 : 19, 20, 21. † 1 Cor. 15 : 28. ‡ Rom. 11 : 36.
§ Rom. 5 : 21. ‖ Jn. 9 : 25.

of proof to others, than that any revelations recorded in the Bible came from that world — from the fact that these give opportunity for *personal* investigation and *personal* test, which is not the case with the phenomena occurring many centuries ago. These personal tests have been by us and others most carefully, patiently and thoroughly applied, resulting in absolute and overwhelming conviction. *If we cannot believe the evidence of our own senses to certain facts*, when observed under the most acute and cautious intellectual scrutiny, *how shall we believe the testimony of men who assert similar facts as occurring eighteen hundred years ago?* For, what are the Scriptures, but the writings of men who claimed to have witnessed certain extraordinary occurrences, or to have been the subjects of some unusual influences — which occurrences and influences have been supposed to be indicative of a superhuman agency, which has been thought to clothe their writings with a superhuman authority? The recurrence of the same phenomena and the same influences, in our day, must surely give equal authority.

That men and women are "inspired" by spiritual intelligences to make revelations or communications to the world at the present time, is more susceptible of proof than that they were in the ancient time, because the phenomena occur daily before our own eyes. And from a careful investigation of what may be known of the phenomena, both external and internal, of *ancient* inspiration, we are prepared to show, as we think beyond question, that those of our day are identical with those of the olden time.*

That some of these revelations are as truly "given by inspiration *of God*" (that is, through the ministration of angels properly commissioned to teach his truth), is also as surely susceptible of proof as that any revelations ever made

* See Introduction (by A. E. Newton) to Dr. Robinson's work, "The Religion of Manhood," just published by B. Marsh.

were so given. They bear the stamp of Divine origin upon their very face, *in that they are in the highest degree worthy of so wise and glorious a Being as the God and Father of all, and are useful, purifying, elevating and ennobling to man.* No higher evidence of a Beneficent Source could possibly be afforded.

That the present is in fact a New Dispensation, adapted to the wants of man's progressive nature, and as far superior to any preceding one in the character of its revelations, as the age of *manhood* is superior to *youth*, is, we aver, fully susceptible of proof. The Mosaic era, or the *Dispensation of Force*, adapted to the childhood of the race, — and the Christian era, or the *Dispensation of Love*, adapted to the period of youth, before reason is matured, — have had their appropriate time; and now dawns the *Dispensation of Wisdom*, adapted to the age of MANHOOD, and addressed preëminently to the reason, and all the higher faculties of man. These revelations extend to all branches of science, to all useful art, to all improving knowledge, in whatever department of man's relations; aiming to qualify him for the responsibilities and the dignity of MANHOOD. They embrace systems of philosophy and of theology which recognize GOD as the author and operator of all natural laws; and, consequently, which do not conflict, at every step, as old systems have done, with all new discoveries and new developments of natural science. They show that GOD's work is perfect; that His universe is full of harmony; and that all His doings are guided by Infinite Wisdom and Infinite Love.

Furthermore, and lastly, that the agents of these revelations — the ministering angels employed in this heavenly service on our behalf — are in some cases our departed friends, and in most, if not all cases, the spirits of departed human beings, is also susceptible of abundant proof. Would that you could know what we know, and enjoy what we have

been permitted to enjoy, of this pure, angelic, heaven-imparting intercourse! All your miserable doubts, and distressing fears, and superstitious dreads, would vanish away before the bright, sweet beams of heavenly love, as shed down from the purified affections of these dwellers in the upper spheres. Would that you could be conscious, as we are made aware, of the intense solicitude with which angel-forms are now hovering over each one of us, — our sainted fathers and mothers, our loved brothers and sisters, our cherub children, and our departed dear ones of every tie, — and among them our recent beloved pastor, now arisen to where a brighter light has burst upon his enraptured vision, and a diviner love swells his expanding soul.* Would that you could know, as we know, the interest with which this "cloud of witnesses" look upon the transactions of this occasion; and that you might recognize and yield your hearts to the gentle breathings of truth which they are striving to impart to every one. Nothing, we assure you, but your own unwillingness, has prevented many of you from fully partaking in the experiences, the convictions, and the unspeakable joys, which we have realized from this source.

* A few hours before the presentation of this answer, as the authors were engaged in revising it at this point, Mrs. N. became sensible of spiritual presence; and, on closing the external vision, that the spiritual senses (that is, the same senses which the spirit uses when separate from the body) might act with less obstruction, she saw before her, with life-like distinctness, the spirit of our former beloved pastor. (He had previously visited us on one or two occasions, since his entrance upon the spirit-life.) He wished to communicate. And although her condition, from illness, was not favorable to a perfect exercise of this power, he succeeded in impressing upon her mind (or brain), word by word, the following message, which she spoke as it was received, and it was noted down by myself. It may be remarked that, as is usual in this method of communicating, but one or two words were made known to her at a time, and that for the most part they faded from her memory as soon as spoken, so that she had at no time the least idea how the sentences were

But *the proofs themselves*, on these various points, we are unable now to present without trespassing further upon your time than we feel authorized to do; but we have stood ready to impart them to all honest inquirers, so far as our abilities have enabled us, yet have sought in vain to induce you to acquaint yourselves with them. We can only say, that to all who are willing to open their eyes to see, and their hearts to

to be completed when commenced, and exercised no thought in the formation of them. Whether such a message could be originated without the action of *some* mind, the reader will judge; and it is believed that no one familiar with the ordinary pulpit efforts of Mr. Pond, will fail to recognize in its style a sufficient similarity to render it *possible*, at least, that it may have emanated from him; while to us the identification furnished by the *spiritual* senses, when developed as they are in the case of Mrs. N., is, at least, *as reliable* as that furnished by the outward vision.

THE MESSAGE.

"My Friends: I come from my celestial home to testify to my continued interest in and watchfulness over the dear people of my earthly charge.

"Tell them that he, who was wont to be called the shepherd over this precious little flock, is often with them; now standing beside him who deals out to them the bread of life on the seventh day; now nearer, even at the door of their hearts, catching the faintest longings for divine wisdom and love. How I yearn, often, to rend the veil which conceals me from their vision, that they may *know* I am with them.

"Tell them that the windows of heaven *are* opened, and that their pastor has become one of the angels of God, who are ascending and descending to bring love and wisdom from Him who promised to guide them into all truth.

"Invite them to embark on the ship whose masts and timbers are *eternal truth* — for they are all mariners on the ever-rolling sea of progression; and their prayers for light and love shall be the winds that will waft them on and over the rough billows of error and the dark waves of ignorance; while he, who once stood before them, will stand at the helm, and guide them toward the great city of God — ever receiving from above new stores of wisdom, and dispensing along the shores of time to the hungry and the naked who come to be fed and clothed.

"Tell them to throw off from their eyes the dark bandage of secta-

appreciate, these evidences are abundantly and overwhelmingly sufficient. Could we lay before you what we know, and *all* we know, the recital would astound you and the world. To those who stubbornly or sneeringly refuse to see, they are of course as little apparent as were the evidences of Christ's divine mission to the unbelieving Jews.

Having, therefore, adopted our convictions deliberately, intelligently, and on the basis of irresistible personal evidence, you cannot expect us to abandon them, even though they were in direct conflict with your creed, or with any ancient writing whatever, on the *dictum* of any man, or any body of men of the present day, however well-intentioned, who yet, on their own confession, are wholly unacquainted with these evidences! If we were to recant to-night, we should be compelled to believe again to-morrow. Galileo, when forced to renounce, through fear of the tortures of the Church, his "heresy" of the revolution of the earth, is said to have

rianism, and to look around them and above them; and to breathe in the genial atmosphere of *universal* love; and to drink from the sparkling goblet which the ministering spirits are holding forth to them, that they may be refreshed.

"Tell them no longer to confine themselves to the thorny, briery path * of educated belief and *authoritative* wisdom; no longer to gather perfume from the *prickly* * blossom, thinking that there is no other blossom and no other perfume. Tell them there *is* a Garden of God which they have never conceived of — where the very air is made odorous with a beautiful variety of harmonizing perfume; and, as often as they will come to this garden, — this spirit-home of love and truth, — waiting florists of heavenly wisdom shall weave for them amaranthine wreaths, woven with paradisiacal flowers of firmer hope and brighter joys.

"PRESTON POND."

The message was read to the Church as requested, and the manner in which it was received by them will appear in the sequel. A. E. N.

* He afterwards explained that he here had reference to the doctrines of total depravity, divine vindictiveness, eternal torment, etc.

whispered to a friend as he rose from his knees, "Nevertheless, the world does turn round!" And it has continued to turn, from that day to this, bearing with it Popes and Cardinals, and Churches of all sects; so that now, in the consent of all Christendom, GALILEO'S *heresy* has become GOD'S TRUTH. SO WILL IT BE WITH THE HERESY OF TO-DAY!

Such is our answer to your charges.

CONCLUSION AND WITHDRAWAL.

And, now, in conclusion, dear brothers and sisters, we have a few words to add concerning our relations with you.

When, several months since, we addressed you a request to be released from all obligations to you, it was our design to remain with you in the ordinary duties of church-fellowship till such time as you should see fit to take action upon our request. But it soon became apparent that this would be neither profitable nor desirable on either part; and we have accordingly sought for religious association and instruction from sources more congenial with our present convictions of truth and duty.

Being sincerely desirous, however, of opportunities to lay before you the evidences on which our new and joyful convictions rest, that you might thus be led to rejoice with us in the advancing light of God's kingdom, — and, truly anxious, also, to be shown the errors, if such there be, in our present belief, — we were willing to remain in nominal connection with you, in the hope that your sense of obligation, if not your love of truth, would lead you, either individually or as a body, to seek in a rational and Christian way to enlighten yourselves in regard to this matter. By this means only could you become qualified to show us wherein we have erred from the truth, that thus you might "recover us out of the snare of the devil," into which you imagine us to have fallen. But we have waited in vain for any efforts of

kind. We have become convinced that there exists among you neither the *ability* to point out a single error, nor the *courage* or the *disposition* to meet in a manly and candid manner the questions involved. Your language, with a few individual exceptions, has been, "We do not wish to investigate — we have nothing to do with investigation — we have already decided that we are right, and you must be wrong *of course;* we have, therefore, nothing to do but to deal with you accordingly." Your intent, as indicated in your course thus far, seems to be to cut off, rather than to restore — to destroy, as far as you may, rather than to save.

Finding, therefore, that our relationship to you has ceased to be of any profit on either side, it matters not to us how speedily it is terminated. And having voluntarily entered into this relationship with you, for certain mutual advantages, we have a moral right voluntarily to withdraw from it, whenever those advantages can no longer be realized. We consider, moreover, that the unusual circumstances of our case, and especially the unjustifiable course of proceeding which has been pursued by you, are a sufficient justification for a somewhat unusual or "irregular" mode of withdrawal.

Feeling conscious, in the very depths of our being, of a loving fellowship with the Father of our spirits, and a vital union with his Son Jesus, far more sweet and soul-satisfying than we ever derived from our connection with you, — a fellowship and union which neither mortals nor angels, life nor death, time nor eternity, can sever, — and realizing from day to day the consolations, encouragements and joys of actual communion with "an innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect," — you will readily perceive that any expression of censure or condemnation on your part will affect us only as it shall excite in our hearts a true commiseration on your behalf. Had we been educated Hindoos or Romanists, and, on receiving greater light, em-

braced purer truth and higher wisdom, and felt constrained to withdraw from old associations, you would expect us to have little regard, other than pity, for either the anxieties or denunciations of even our kindest friends whom we knew to be still in the dark. Similar to this, we say in all kindness, do we feel to be our position with regard to you; and, while we know the weakness of the flesh under the consciousness of wrong, from which we do not claim to be exempt, yet it will be our endeavor to cherish the spirit and imitate the example of Him who prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!"

We, therefore, feeling that you, as a Church, have forfeited all right, of whatever nature, to exercise any authority over us, *do now distinctly declare that henceforth we acknowledge no allegiance to your body, and shall recognize your authority in no degree.*

With the kindest feelings of personal regard towards each and all of you, with thanks for the special tokens of confidence and respect we have received from some, and with most earnest prayers that your eyes may speedily be opened (as we are confident they surely will be in due time) to the glorious appreciation of the Dispensation of Wisdom, and to the *realization* with us of the unspeakable blessings and joys of angelic ministration, we now take our leave of you as members of the Edwards Church; but shall ever continue to be, in the bonds of an all-embracing love,

Your brother and sister,

A. E. Newton,

S. J. Newton.

THE CLOSING DISCUSSION.

The foregoing Answer and Withdrawal having been submitted before the Church, the respondent remarked that if any one had any questions or explanations to ask, or remarks to make which he was desired to hear; or if any one felt aggrieved, or in any way misrepresented by what had been stated, and desired to be set right, he would remain at their pleasure; otherwise, he would retire, and take no further part or interest in the proceedings. A strong desire was expressed that he should remain, and a discussion or conversation ensued, of which the following is the substance.

The report is not strictly verbatim, but the writer is confident that the speakers will find their ideas represented with substantial accuracy, and to a great extent in their own words; and, moreover, that nothing of importance said on the occasion has been omitted. Some unessential points, not noticed at the time, have been attended to in the replies; but in the main they also are given as made on the spot.

The names of the speakers are withheld, as the object is not to hold up individuals to criticism, but to show what kind of arguments,— after eight months of consideration on the part of the Church, and consultation with the wisest and most learned rabbis of orthodoxy in Boston,— were brought forth with which to oppose the claims of Spiritualism.

The acting Moderator of the Church commenced by saying, that he exceedingly regretted the spirit of antagonism which had arisen in this case.

He should have remembered that for this the Church alone was responsible; since they had chosen to act the part of *prosecutors* rather than of *brethren*.

He spoke of the confidence and esteem with which he had for years regarded those against whom these charges had been brought, of the delightful Christian communion he had enjoyed with Mr. N., in other days, and while members together of another Church.

He testified to the irreproachable moral and religious character they both had ever sustained, and fully acquitted them of any dereliction from Christian duty. He referred to the strong desire he had felt, from the commencement of the Edwards Church enterprise, to enlist them in it — of the persevering efforts he had made to that end — the joy he had felt when it was accomplished, and the satisfaction which the aid they had rendered had afforded him and all. Consequently his regret and disappointment at the "defection" which had followed, was deep and heartfelt. He still believed, however, that they were true Christians, and he had none but the kindest feelings towards them; but when they had come to allow themselves such "looseness" of principle, such laxity of sentiment, he felt that the Church was bound to express its disapprobation.

What the brother said of the "looseness" of our principles, after his high encomium upon our Christian character, sounded strangely; but he proceeded to explain:

He referred to the disbelief which we had avowed in the "fearful sanctions of God's word," in the awful doom which awaits the wicked in the future world. "We all know," said he, "that the dreadful denunciations of the Bible are hardly sufficient to restrain us from wickedness, and what must be our condition if we believed in a future probation, and the possibility of the final restoration of all to the favor of God!"

If these "dreadful denunciations" and awful fears, only, restrain our brother from wickedness, he is surely to be pitied! We freely admit that we long since ceased to regard these as proper motives to Christian duty. "Perfect love casteth out fear."

He went on in a somewhat extended Scripture argument to rebut this dangerous doctrine of a future probation, quoting numerous passages which we had supposed all intelligent believers in endless misery had long since ceased to regard as applicable. He closed by remarking upon the danger of ceasing to regard the Bible as the only and supreme authority, declaring that we had set up our reason as the judge of God's word.

Question. Do you not use your reason in deciding that the Bible is God's word?

Answer. I use my reason and God's truth.

Ques. But how do you decide what *is* God's truth?

No answer.

Dea. —— followed. He said *Mr.** Newton had complained that the members of the Church had not called upon him, and tried to show him his errors. For his part he was unable to argue with Mr. N., as he was wholly unacquainted with the subject of these new things, and Mr. N. would be continually quoting from the Bible, with which he was more familiar than himself, and therefore had the advantage of him. He had talked some with him, however, although he had not been to him for that purpose, and did not know as it made any difference where the conversation was held.

It was replied, that the difference lies in the fact that the rule on which you profess to act, requires that you should "go and see" your brother; whereas, in all cases, these interviews had been sought by myself, and any discussion of the differences between us was always declined by you, for reasons similar to those you have stated.

He had meant to pursue a kind and proper course—had hoped that time would have shown Mr. and Mrs. N. their errors, and that they would in a few months have come back; was very sorry it had not proved so. He would ask Mr. N. if he believes that all modern revelations are true and authoritative.

Ans. By no means.

"How, then, do you distinguish between the true and the false?"

Ans. In the same way that people of old decided between true and false prophets, between true and false teachers of any class. The time was when the Bible did not exist. The various books contained in it were written at different times, and their character was pronounced upon by those who took it upon them to decide what should be received and what rejected. *They* could not use the Bible as a standard, for that was the very thing to be judged. How could the people of Moses' time determine that he was a true prophet, when they had no written Scriptures with which to compare his teachings? His *claim*, and that of others, to speak for the Lord, did not decide the question, for the false

* It was instructive to observe with what care the fraternal appellations of *Brother* and *Sister*, which had once been so punctiliously bestowed, were on these occasions avoided. So surely does the spirit of sectarianism, the stickling for a creed, freeze up every generous sentiment towards those who "follow not with us."

prophets made the same claim. The *working of miracles* did not of itself establish his truthfulness, for the magicians "did so with their enchantments;" and Christ especially cautions against false prophets who should "show great signs and wonders" (Matt. 24 : 24),—while John the Baptist, one of the greatest of prophets, "did no miracle." Some other standard, then, than either Scriptures or miracles, must have been employed in determining the truthfulness and authority of religious teachers and revelations in former ages. What was that,—what could it be but *the intuitive perceptions, the reason and the moral sense*, of the people by whom they were accepted? They received, and have handed down to us, what *they* conceived to be divinely inspired and authoritative —what *they* judged to be worthy of God and useful to man. Now, are not we, with all the light of the past before us, with all the intellectual and moral advancement of this nineteenth century, *as* capable as those people of unscientific and barbarous ages, of deciding similar questions for ourselves?

Without replying to this question, the brother proceeded:

I believe, if God had anything to reveal to us, he would take some way to do it that would leave no question as to its source. A message has been read, purporting to come from our former pastor; I believe if he had anything to communicate, he would do it in such a manner that there could be no mistake about it.

Ans. It has always been common for man to be dissatisfied with the manner in which God has revealed his truth. Instead of looking at the truth itself, and considering whether it was worthy of God, and adapted to man's needs, he has quarrelled with the *mode* of its communication. "As for this fellow, we know not whence he is," said the Jews of Christ.

Br. —— (not a member of the committee) then took the floor. He said that, in regard to the right of the Church to pursue a different course in this case, Mr. N. had not properly quoted from the Constitution of the Church. This limits its independence to what is in accordance with established Congregational principles only. Now one established principle is, that there is but one way into the Church, and but one way out of it [that is, by excommunication, it is presumed].

Reply. If the Church had the power voluntarily to limit itself by such a principle, it had the same power to withdraw its adherence thereto — and it could not better employ its last days than in establishing a more worthy precedent.

Mr. Newton misrepresents in stating that no effort has been made to show him his errors, etc. I have talked with him on various occasions, and at great length — have probably spent some twelve hours in such conversation.

Ans. But never on occasions of your own seeking. It has been when we have casually met, or when I have sought you, and I really had supposed I was laboring for *your* conversion, rather than *you* for mine.

I have, however, found it utterly useless to attempt to reason with him on any common ground; for he would always meet me with "*I know*" this, and "*I have seen*" that. Now, what is the use of trying to argue with such a man?

Ans. These expressions were used in relation to facts and phenomena which had come under my own observation, and concerning which I could therefore speak with positiveness. These facts were stubborn things, and of course were not to be *reasoned* out of the way on ordinary principles. They were stated with the hope that the brother, who once had some confidence in my veracity, would by my testimony be induced to witness them for himself, and then *he* would be able to say that *he knew* and *had seen*. I was never able to succeed, however, in inducing him to look at the first fact on this subject, and consequently he *does not know what he might*.

As to the origin of these communications, said to come from the spirit world, it is perfectly evident that they are not from that source. Take the Letter addressed to this Church, and notice its grandiloquent and flowery style.* Also the many very pretty and very poetical things said and written by these mediums, about "sparkling goblets," and "flowery wreaths," and so on [alluding to the message from Mr. Pond]. *Spirits* would never communicate to us in this style. They would use plain, straight-forward language — they would present truth in its most concrete form.†

I here interrupted him with the remark: Probably the brother knows all about the spirit-world, and what spirits would do!

* This Letter makes no claim to be from a spiritual source.

† That is, in the form of a "Shorter Catechism," or an "Orthodox Creed," or a "Body of Divinity," he probably imagines! He objects to the very characteristics which, in most minds, are essential to evidence of a higher than earthly origin. Do all sublimity, and all poetry, and all beauty, pertain only to earth? And is the poetic and exalted language employed in portions of the Bible indicative of a merely human source?

He replied, in a somewhat perturbed tone: "Perhaps some people don't know so much about them as they think they do."

He, moreover, personally knew some of the men who were the great lights of this new dispensation, and they were men of bad moral character; and yet they stand high, and are quoted as authority.

Did I ever quote such persons as authority? No answer. I remarked that this objection brought forcibly to mind what was said of the Great Teacher of a previous dispensation: "Can any good thing come out of *Nazareth*," that despised and wicked village? "He eateth with publicans and *sinners*." "As for this man, *we know* that he is a sinner," etc.

The preachers of it are the men who have taught in this community the revolting doctrine that the murderer and his victim should go to heaven together.

I asked, Does the brother mean to say that it would be revolting to him to have a murderer reform, and thus be raised to virtue, happiness, and heaven?

It is revolting to think that the criminal, with his hands imbrued in his brother's blood, shall go instantly and sit down side by side with the innocent victim of his malice —

No spiritualist believes that.

— or that, even after a long process of restoration, they should at last be brought together around the throne of God.

I had always supposed this to be a most desirable consummation to the benevolent heart.

And then the idea of three successive dispensations,— that of force, and of love, and of wisdom,— how perfectly chimerical! It is ridiculously absurd to claim that there is anything in these pretended revelations and communications of our day, that is in advance of the teachings of Christ, or that his instructions were not fully adapted to the highest condition of manhood.

This is because the brother is unacquainted with the teachings of the New Dispensation. Manhood requires a knowledge of science, philosophy, and all useful art. Jesus taught neither; but these, and all other conceivable needs of man, are embraced in the unfoldings of this age. If the brother is ignorant of this fact, it is not because it does not exist.*

* Surely the arguments employed by the exclusive adherents to the former dispen-

The same brother inquired, Are your revelations made directly to yourself, or do they come wholly through others?

Ans. Partly, I have reason to believe, in both ways. In illustration and explanation, I will state a single fact, if there is no objection. I was recently called upon to deliver a public lecture on Spiritualism. While preparing for that occasion, one day when occupied with my usual employment at my office, a train of thought, of a character which had never occurred to me before, but which appeared to be eminently clear, forcible and valuable, passed through my mind. The ideas seemed so conclusive and important, that I left the employment which at the time engrossed me, and started for my desk to make a note of them for future use; but, it occurring to me that my business was just then pressing, I returned to my labor, and banished the subject as far as might be from my mind. On going home, some hours subsequently I found a friend in my family, and an hour passed in conversation on general matters, without any allusion being made to the subject of my previous thoughts, or the matter having recurred to me in any way. I was about leaving the house again, when Mrs. N., becoming sensible of spiritual presence, said to me that my father * was by her, and had something to say to me. I inquired what it was; when she spoke these words at his dictation:

"Alonzo, *I wish you to remember the thoughts that were suggested to you, in your office this forenoon, for your lecture, and note them down; and at the first opportunity, when you can sit with Sarah, I will, through her, elaborate them more fully for you.*"

It at once recurred to me that I had some thoughts which I considered very valuable, but the subject of them had wholly passed from my mind. For some moments, I made every possible effort to recall them, but was utterly unable to do so. I then said, If those suggestions were from my father, will he endeavor to remind me of their import? She immediately spoke the words:

"The adaptation of moral truths to the advancing stages of development in the human race."

This was the precise subject of my morning thoughts, and my mind had been occupied in tracing this adaptation through the dispensations of the past, as recorded in the Bible. Of this fact, however, she could have had no information, by any usual means. No suitable opportunity occurred, however, for the proposed communication through her, until I

sations, against the claims of the new, of which the foregoing are specimens, will not justify the conviction that they have advanced much beyond *childhood*.

* He has been some twenty years in the spirit world, and was never seen by Mrs. N. in the flesh, yet she has repeatedly described his personal appearance with particular accuracy.

had completed the plan, and nearly finished the writing of my lecture, when, an occasion presenting, I inquired of my father if he had any further suggestions to make on the subject. The reply was: "You have all — the table is fully spread — nothing remains but for you to hand forth the food to the hungering multitudes."

I narrate this not for the purpose of setting up any claim for myself, or of imparting any extrinsic *authority* to anything I may have said or written. My position is, that all opinions and all teachings, from whatever source, must be valued according to their *intrinsic* merits. But I give it as one of the thousands of evidences, daily occurring, of the presence and interference of spiritual intelligences; and also as possibly throwing some light on an interesting question, the origin of our thoughts.

Ques. By another brother. Did *you* see and hear your father on this occasion?

Ans. I did not, my own internal senses not being opened as yet to that extent. That Mrs. N. does really perceive or "discern" (as Paul expresses it, 1 Cor. 12 : 10) spiritual beings, has been abundantly proved by a long course of experience and observation. I presume my brethren, who are wholly unacquainted with this new branch of inquiry, are unable to comprehend "how these things can be." Two years ago, I was perhaps as much in the dark as you. But within that time, by careful application, I have been enabled to learn *some things which I did not know before.* I trust that this may be the case with all of you.

Thanking you for the expressions of brotherly love and of good wishes, on the present occasion, — which I could wish had been somewhat earlier exhibited,— but regretting your persistence in the course of procedure which you have seen fit to adopt, and which I was willing, at the first, to believe a mere inadvertence,— I now part from you with the kindest feelings, nay, with the warmest desires that you may be induced, by the transactions of this occasion, to hereafter take those steps which shall lead you to that "Garden of God," among whose perfumes and beauties I now luxuriate. I bid you farewell.

THE FINAL ACT.

It was expected that, notwithstanding our withdrawal, the Church would deem it necessary, in pursuance of its rules, to "inflict" upon us the usual vote of excommunication. Since the binding character of those rules had been insisted upon, from the first, as an imperative reason for non-compliance with our request for release, we did not look for a deviation from them in the result. It was, therefore, with some surprise that we perused the following official transcript of the final act. Although the preamble contains a new allegation, not before charged, and one that is more easily charged than proved,— that of having "*sinfully* departed from their communion,"— yet the mild form of the excommunicatory sentence furnishes surely a hopeful sign of progress. The invocation in our behalf, so kindly offered in the last resolution, is most ardently reciprocated; and, we think, with greater hope of its being heard than they can indulge — since *our* aspiration is that they may be guided upward into a region of greater light; while *they* would fain have us dragged down again into their own darkness,— a work in which the "Spirit of Truth" will hardly be likely to give them aid!

"*Boston, January* 16*th*, 1854.

"TO MR. ALONZO E. NEWTON AND MRS. SARAH J. NEWTON.

"At a meeting of the Edwards Congregational Church, on Friday evening, January 6th, 1854, it was unanimously

"*Voted*, That the charges preferred against you (a copy of which you had, and to which you answered) were fully sustained.

"After which, the following preamble and resolutions were unanimously adopted.

"Whereas our brother and sister, Mr. and Mrs. A. E. Newton, have imbibed sentiments and avowed doctrines with which this Church have no sympathy, and upon a recent examination before the Church, have only exhibited great tenacity for their belief, which is utterly inconsistent, in our view, with the teachings of the holy Scriptures; and furthermore, they having sinfully departed from our communion, therefore,

"*Resolved*, That this Church justly esteems, and declares itself discharged from any further inspection over them; and hereby withdraws its watch and care from them.

"*Resolved*, That we sincerely deplore the existence of causes which have resulted in the dissolution of our connection with our late brother and sister (who have heretofore been an honor and credit to the Church), and earnestly implore for them the influence and guidance of that Spirit which leadeth into all truth.

"Attest. T. C. DUNNELS, Clerk."

Thus has terminated our external relationship to the Church of the Old Dispensation. We still belong, however, to the great *Church of Humanity*, of which God our Father is the eternal Head — of which the Universe is the ever-unfolding Book, and Nature the everlasting Preacher, and in which all mankind are our brothers and sisters, the sons and daughters of God! "Forgetting the things which are behind," whose glory has been eclipsed by the "*more* glorious ministration" of the present, we shall henceforth "press forward" toward the higher and brighter revealings of the future,— unfettered by the trammels of creed or sect, — free to know, to love, and to adore!

THE

NEW ENGLAND SPIRITUALIST,

EDITED AND PUBLISHED BY

A. E. NEWTON,

15 FRANKLIN STREET, BOSTON.

THE writer of "The Ministry of Angels Realized" has been induced, by the urgency of friends, to engage in the publication of a weekly journal, under the above title.

The leading purpose of this paper is, to present the evidences, now abounding and multiplying on every hand, that SPIRITS EXIST, and that THEY COMMUNICATE WITH MORTALS. The execution of this design necessarily leads somewhat to inquiries into the more abstruse departments of PHYSICAL, MENTAL and PSYCHICAL SCIENCE; and involves to some extent the consideration of various MORAL, THEOLOGICAL and PHILOSOPHICAL questions. The PRACTICAL BENEFITS which result from free communion with superior intelligences, are exhibited as they unfold themselves. Specimens of COMMUNICATIONS FROM SPIRITS are given, being regarded as suggestive of thought, rather than as authoritative teachings; and ILLUSTRATIONS OF LIFE IN THE SPIRIT-WORLD, as described by its inhabitants and by visionists, are presented.

It is the Editor's aim to adapt the *Spiritualist* to the wants of all classes of persons who are interested in the Spiritual Developments of the age,—to exhibit a catholic and tolerant spirit towards all shades of opinion that obtain among Spiritualists,—and to meet in a kindly and rational manner all objections and difficulties honestly urged against the belief of spirit-communion, especially on the part of the religious world.

The Editor desires to elicit TRUTH, and not to establish a sect,—to promote Mental and Spiritual FREEDOM, rather than inculcate specific dogmas,—and thus, as a sure ultimate, to secure the elevation, spiritualization, and advancement of mankind.

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